

# News Release



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **CHURCHILL DOWNS OPENS 11-DAY SEPTEMBER MEET FRIDAY AT 12:45 P.M.; HORSEMEN TO COMPETE FOR RECORD PRIZE MONEY OVER THREE WEEKS**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2017)** – Horse racing on the Kentucky circuit shifts to Churchill Downs on Friday (Sept. 15) with a 10-race program at 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern) as the famed Louisville racetrack opens its fifth September Meet for an action-packed 11-date run through Sunday, Oct. 1.

This year's three-week, boutique race meeting, presented by **Commonwealth Technology**, will feature record purse levels. Horsemen can compete for \$4.81 million in prize money offered in Director of Racing **Ben Huffman**'s 109-race September Meet condition book, which averages to \$437,000 per day. Last year, an unprecedented \$4,189,809 was paid to horsemen for a daily average of \$380,892, which was up 16.2% from the prior year.

Inaugurated in 2013 by request from Kentucky horsemen, the three-week September Meet provides area horse owners, trainers and jockeys a viable racing option to compete for ample prize money mainly on dirt during an important time on the racing calendar in advance of the popular Keeneland and Churchill Downs fall meets.

A total of 99 horses and four also-eligible entries were drawn Tuesday for Friday's opener for an average of 9.9 horses per race. The average field size during last year's meeting was a September record 8.5 horses.

The second half of the 10-race card features a pair of maiden races, including one for 2-year-old fillies, and a pair of allowances. The most lucrative opening day race is the eighth race at 4:18 p.m., a \$55,000 allowance/optional claiming event (\$62,500 claiming tag) over one mile that attracted a competitive field of nine fillies and mares. Race 9 at 4:50 p.m. is a first-level, seven-furlong allowance that lured 11 3-year-olds, including **Brittlyn Stables' Behavioral Biss**, who rolled to a three-length maiden win at Saratoga on Aug. 5 for trainer **Al Stall Jr.**

The maiden special weight for 2-year-old fillies at one mile goes as the sixth race at 3:16 p.m. and drew an oversubscribed cast of 15 in the maximum 12-horse field. Among the entrants is **Churchill Downs Racing Club's Party Club**, a daughter of Sky Mesa who looks to break through after a trio of summertime races at Ellis Park and Saratoga. Trained by 82-year-old legend **D. Wayne Lukas**, Party Club is one of two juvenile fillies – the other is Card Club – that were purchased by the 200-member club earlier this year with earnings accrued by their first horse, 3-year-old **Warrior's Club**, who won for the third time on Labor Day weekend at Saratoga to boost his career record to 16-3-3-3—\$293,299.

"Whoever thought the club would be this successful?" Lukas said on **ESPN 680/105.7's "Inside Churchill Downs,"** which airs Fridays at 6 p.m. "Both (fillies) will be really effective this fall. I think Party Club is definitely sitting on a good race."

### ***Romans Looks to Surpass Mott as Churchill Downs' All-Time Leading Trainer***

**Dale Romans** has three horses entered on opening day – **Leanne N Susan** in Race 5 (2:45 p.m.), first-time starter **Dance Rhythms** in Race 6 (3:16 p.m.) and **Front Row Debbie** in Race 7 (3:47 p.m.) – as the 50-year-old South Louisville native attempts to become only the second trainer in Churchill Downs history to win 700 career races beneath the track's iconic Twin Spires and surpass Hall of Fame trainer **Bill Mott** as the all-time leading trainer in races won at the 143-year-old historic home of the Kentucky Derby – a record that 63-year-old Mott has held for 31 years. Mott, who has no horses entered on opening day, begins the September Meet with 701-to-699 lead in career races won at Churchill Downs. Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen** is third with 614 victories.

Other horsemen approaching Churchill Downs career milestones include jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.** (479 wins) and trainers **Greg Foley** (397), **Kenny McPeek** (394) and **Ian Wilkes** (191).

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## ***Road to Kentucky Derby Kickoff Highlights Opening Weekend Stakes Quartet***

The September Meet's nine-race stakes schedule cumulatively worth \$1.15 million kicks off Saturday with a stakes quartet, including two important 1 1/16-mile fixtures for juveniles that could produce starters in next spring's \$2 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (Grade I) and the \$1 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI). The \$150,000 **Iroquois** (GIII) kicks off the 36-race **"Road to the Kentucky Derby"** series (Top 4 Points: 10-4-2-1), while the \$200,000 **Pocahontas** (GII) starts the 31-race **"Road to the Kentucky Oaks"** (Top 4 Points: 10-4-2-1). Also, both races are **Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In" Challenge** events, which means the winners will receive automatic berths in the starting gate for their respective Breeders' Cup races on Nov. 4 at Del Mar with travel expenses paid.

The Romans-trained **Hollywood Star**, the Malibu Moon colt purchased by **Albaugh Family Stable** for \$550,000 as a yearling and recent runner-up to **Copper Bullet** in the Saratoga Special (GII), is expected to headline the 36<sup>th</sup> running of the Iroquois along with Bashford Manor (GIII) winner and Ellis Park Juvenile third **Ten City**, who is trained by McPeek. Other starters, according to stakes coordinator **Dan Bork**, could include **Big Gemmy, Ebbin, Flameaway, Mo Diddley, Pont Du Gard, Smart Remark and Tres Equis**.

**Kelly Humor, Upset Brewing and Sunny Skies** – the top three finishers in the Ellis Park Debutante – are likely for the 49<sup>th</sup> running of the Pocahontas, along with **Firstmate, Lady Freedom, Patrona Margarita, Primo Extremo, Sassy Sienna, Snowfire, Sultry, Take Charge Paula and Vision of Justice**.

Saturday's stakes foursome is completed by a pair of stakes for fillies and mares, the \$100,000 **Locust Grove** (GIII) over 1 1/16 miles and \$100,000 Open Mind (Listed) at six furlongs.

## ***UofL, Clemson Fans Can Pre-Game at Churchill Downs***

Central Avenue will be bustling with activity on Saturday. In addition to the live racing at Churchill Downs, **ESPN's College GameDay** will be in town in advance of that night's nationally-televised **ACC** showdown on **ABC** between the 14<sup>th</sup>-ranked **University of Louisville** football team and third-ranked **Clemson** at nearby Papa John's Cardinal Stadium. Kickoff was moved from 3:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., which means visitors can now enjoy the best of both worlds as Churchill Downs' final race is set for 5:20 p.m. Two years ago, approximately one thousand Clemson fans pre-gamed at Churchill Downs, and their alumni has booked an event for Saturday. Also, **WCCP 105.5 FM**, the flagship station of Clemson athletics, will broadcast a pre-game show from Churchill Downs that day.

## ***Ideal Weather: Sunny Skies, 80s***

Opening weekend weather in Louisville will be ideal, according to the **National Weather Service**, with a forecast of mostly sunny skies and temperatures in the 80s.

## ***Downs After Dark on Saturday, Sept. 23 at 6 p.m.; Bourbon, Bets and Bow Ties is Theme***

The \$100,000 **Dogwood Presented by GE Appliances** for 3-year-old fillies at seven furlongs and \$100,000 **President of the UAE Cup** (GI) for Arabians 4-years-old and up at 1 1/16 miles will be the featured events on Saturday, Sept. 23 – the lone **Downs After Dark Presented by Stella Artois and Woodford Reserve** night racing event of the September Meet and last one of the year. The event theme that evening will be **Bourbon, Bets and Bow Ties** as guests celebrate the best of the south including bourbon, Thoroughbred racing and fashion.

## ***Now-Graded Lukas Classic Tops Closing Weekend Stakes Tripleheader***

A stakes tripleheader topped by the 1 1/8-mile **Lukas Classic** – named in honor of Hall of Famer D. Wayne Lukas – will be showcased on Saturday, Sept. 30. The Lukas Classic, which earned Grade III status for the first time and received a \$25,000 purse increase to \$200,000, is intended as a prep for older horses to compete in the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) and late November's Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) – will be showcased on Saturday, Sept. 30. The race shares the spotlight with top milers in the \$100,000 **Ack Ack** (GIII) and 3-year-olds in the \$100,000 **Jefferson Cup** (Listed) at 1 1/8 miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course – the only stakes race on grass during the meet.

The aforementioned Warrior's Club is expected to contest the Ack Ack, according to Lukas.

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## ***Racing Thursday-Sunday; First Race 12:45 p.m. Most Days***

Churchill Downs' 11-day meet will be staged over three weekends through Sunday, Oct. 1 with racing on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The first race will be 12:45 p.m. daily (admission gates open at 11:30 a.m.) with the exception of a pair of 5 p.m. (gates at 4 p.m.) Twilight Thursdays and a 6 p.m. first post (gates at 5 p.m.) on Saturday, Sept. 23.

## ***Popular 5 p.m. 'Twilight Thursdays' Return With \$1 Beer, Live Music, Food Trucks***

The two **Twilight Thursdays** will feature \$1 beer, live music (James Lindsey on Sept. 21 and **Otis Junior and The Jesse Lees** on Sept. 28), food trucks (Holy Mole, Red Top Gourmet Hot Dogs, Pollo, 502 Café, Mark's Feed Store and Zoom Zoom Yum), and Wagering 101 tips from resident handicappers in Churchill Downs' Plaza from 5-8 p.m.

## ***Family Adventure Day Scheduled for Closing Day***

**Family Adventure Day Presented by Kroger** is scheduled for closing day on Sunday, Oct. 1. Families are encouraged to bring the kids to Churchill Downs for a day of racing and family activities including pony rides, inflatables, petting zoo, stick horse races on the turf course, face painting and more.

Tickets for adults and children age 3 and up are just \$8 when purchased online in advance at ChurchillDowns.com, and include unlimited access to all kid-friendly activities through 5 p.m. Churchill Downs is also offering a Family Four Pack that includes four Family Adventure Day tickets, four family meals in the Family Adventure Day area and two racing programs for only \$44 (a \$59 package includes reserved box seats).

## ***Pair of 'Who's the Champ? Handicapping Contests' on Tap***

The **"Who's the Champ? Handicapping Contest"** will be held on Sundays, Sept. 24 and Oct. 1. Interested participants can enter for \$35 (\$30 for TSC Elite members) for a chance to win the \$1,000 cash voucher first prize by placing mythical \$2 win and place bets on Races 3-8. Second place receives a \$500 voucher and third place is worth a \$200 voucher. Registration takes place those days between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on the Clubhouse second floor at the top of the Gate 17 escalators.

## ***Betting Menu Features 20-Cent Single 6 Jackpot***

The betting menu will be the same as recent meets and includes the 20-cent minimum **"Single 6 Jackpot,"** which is offered on the last six races each day with a low 15-percent takeout. The Single 6 Jackpot will be paid out only if there is a single winning wager with six winners placed at the required minimum bet value. If there are multiple winning wagers with six winners in the six-race sequence, 90 percent of the net money wagering into the pool will be paid out, and the remaining 10 percent will carry to the Single 6 Jackpot. If there are no tickets will all six winners, 100 percent of the pool will carry to the Single 6 Jackpot. There will be a mandatory payout on closing day.

## ***Albarado, Romans, Ramsey Defend September Titles***

Veteran jockey **Robby Albarado** had the hot hand during last year's September Meet with 15 wins, three more than **Corey Lanerie** and **Brian Hernandez Jr.** Lanerie piloted 58 winners during this year's Spring Meet to collect his 13<sup>th</sup> riding title in the last 15 meets at Churchill Downs. Romans, a 14-time local leading trainer, was last year's September Meet leading trainer with six wins to Asmussen's five. Asmussen earned his record-extending 18<sup>th</sup> Churchill Downs training title with 23 wins during the spring. The leading owners last September were **Ken and Sarah Ramsey**, who have won a record 28 crowns and 469 races at the Downs. This spring's top owner was **Maggi Moss**, who won 11 races compared to the Ramsey's nine.

## ***General Admission, Reserved Seating Options***

General admission to Churchill Downs is \$3 (\$1 for seniors age 60 and up) and \$10 for Downs After Dark on Saturday, Sept. 23. Reserved box seats are \$10 (\$25 for Downs After Dark) and indoor dining options are \$38 (\$70 for Downs After Dark). Children 12 and under are admitted free when accompanied by an adult (Downs After Dark policy: no one under the age of 18 will be admitted to the track unless they are accompanied by a parent or responsible adult). Free seating is available over a first-come, first-serve basis in Sections 115-117. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets) or by calling (502) 636-4400.

### ***‘Stakes and Eggs’ Sunday Brunch***

On Sundays, Churchill Downs is offering a special “**Stakes and Eggs**” brunch special in the Stakes Room every. The \$45 package for adults and \$22 package for children includes a seat in the Stakes Room on the fourth floor of the Clubhouse and all-you-can-eat access to the brunch menu that includes an omelet station, scrambled eggs, biscuits and country gravy, French toast, hot brown, carved country ham, crispy bacon, sausage patties, hash brown potatoes with peppers and onions, fresh fruit, garden vegetables, breakfast breads and a chef’s dessert display.

### ***Construction Continues, Visit ChurchillDowns.com/Parking for Recommended Routes, Lots***

Parking is free in the Longfield Avenue lot (Gates 10 & 12). Valet parking is \$10. Initial work on a construction project will temporarily alter traffic and parking for a segment of guests who plan to attend the Louisville racetrack’s upcoming September Meet. Guests are advised to visit [www.ChurchillDowns.com/Parking](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com/Parking) in advance of attending the historic racetrack to view recommended alternative routes and a complete list of guest-appropriate temporary parking lots.

The construction project, which is designed to enhance transportation ingress and egress at Churchill Downs Racetrack, is in a preliminary stage until final approvals and permits from Louisville Metro Government are realized. The improvements aim to advance the overall traffic and parking flow for guests who visit the historic racetrack throughout the year, including the high-volume crowds of Kentucky Derby and Breeders’ Cup weeks. Additional aspects of the development include a promenade for guests to safely enter and exit the racetrack from and to the parking and loading/drop-off areas, and much-needed landscaping to an area at the facility mostly devoid of trees and plantings.

Parking lots will be reshaped, and the project could include traffic alternatives on the west side of its property. Discussions with neighborhood groups and city agencies and officials are underway to close select side streets in a nearly 50-acre area located within the track’s geographic footprint.

Current project work includes temporary lot closures and detours. Signs, electronic message boards and personnel will be in place to alert guests about the temporary closures and direct them to appropriate parking lots. Each lot will include handicapped parking. Gate 17 drop-offs are still allowed by heading south on 9<sup>th</sup> St. off of Central Ave.

### ***Starting Gates Suites Project Progresses***

When guests return to Churchill Downs for the September Meet, they’ll notice significant progress on the track’s \$37 million capital project that will deliver more than 1,800 new seats for the 2018 Kentucky Derby through the addition of new luxury suites, interior dining tables and third-floor Grandstand seats.

Steel has been erected for the Starting Gate Suites capital project that encompasses 77,250 square feet of new space on the north end of the racetrack. The structure, which will feature three floors of individual suites along with dining and event space, is being built adjacent to the Jockey Club Suites, which opened in 2003.

The new luxury suites, which will feature indoor lounge seating with a bar and a private tiered balcony that overlooks the start of the Kentucky Derby at the top of the homestretch, will host 1,140 ticketed guests. Up to new 36 individual suites will be able to accommodate groups of various sizes.

Each of the three levels in the new Starting Gate Suites will feature event space with 24 eight-top tables for interior dining for a total of 576 seats. The project also will include the construction of 110 new third-floor Grandstand seats.

The Starting Gate Suites project will be complete prior to the 2018 Kentucky Derby.

### ***Odds and Ends***

**Travis Stone** will describe the racing action throughout the September Meet Presented by Commonwealth Technology with **Joe Kristufek** serving as a paddock analysis. Veteran odds maker **Mike Battaglia** has morning line odds duty for the 43<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year.

For more information, call (502) 636-4400 or visit [www.churchilldowns.com](http://www.churchilldowns.com).

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